

Working Session 14: *democratic institutions, including democratic elections, democracy at the national, regional and local levels, citizenship and political rights.*

Talking points for opening by Ambassador Strohal

Let me briefly set the context for this session:

- this session is about democratic institutions and democratic process: they go together. The same holds true with regard to assistance: It concerns institution building as well as process support. Let me give a few examples: eg
 - ✓ parliaments – legislative process
 - ✓ political parties – engagement with people; in other words, participation & representation, the subject of this year's Human Dimension Seminar.
 - ✓ judiciary – Rule of Law
- democratic elections constitute the moment of truth for these issues, they represent the tip of the iceberg of the functioning of democratic institutions and process

Election observation, likewise, can be seen as the tip of the iceberg of democracy assistance.

- OSCE has developed some of the most advanced commitments in these areas. Therefore, today, as in all sessions, we discuss their implementation – successes and challenges. As in other areas, it is often the local level where these successes and challenges manifest themselves most immediately.

I asked Gerald Mitchell to give a brief overview of some of the recurrent challenges participating States are facing.

Before opening floor – 2 brief points:

- 1) you find all our election reports on a CD-ROM for 96-05, and on paper since then, and, of course, electronically at the website.
 - The ODIHR has been involved in electoral processes in 19 OSCE participating States since the last HDIM: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Tajikistan, USA, Netherlands, Serbia, Albania, Estonia, France, Armenia, Ireland, Moldova, Belgium, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Switzerland
- 2) I am pleased to refer to a conversation with our host country
Yesterday, I was received by Foreign Minister, Anna Fotyga
Upon her return from New York and my return from Kiev
At that visit, an invitation was extended to observe the upcoming pre-term parliamentary elections; we will proceed normally. And we are looking forward to further invitations to national elections coming up later in election calendar.